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Letter dated 14 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I write to bring to your attention some disconcerting statements made recently by the purported "Embassy" of the Republic of Turkey to the legally invalid "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", concerning the intention of the Turkish Government to finance a project that aims to transform the annexes of the Apostolos Andreas Monastery into a 120-room hotel.

According to the Turkish Cypriot newspaper *Kibris* of 30 October 2006, the so-called "Chairman of the Aid Mission" of the purported "Embassy" in the occupied area of the Republic of Cyprus, has announced that Turkey is ready to provide 1.5 million new Turkish lira in financial aid for the restoration and reorganization of the surroundings and annexes of the Apostolos Andreas Monastery, in order to promote religious tourism in the area.

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus strongly protests such developments aimed at destroying the character of a highly important religious and cultural landmark of Cyprus. It should be pointed out that any unauthorized alterations to this historic religious site that disregard the restoration plans already undertaken by the Church of Cyprus, which is the lawful owner of the Monastery, will not only destroy its cultural and religious character but will also endanger the rest of the building.

Even more gravely, it would constitute a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and of the law of armed conflict, which both stipulate with clarity the obligations of an occupying Power — in this case of the Republic of Turkey — in the field of property rights of the lawful owners of such properties.

Regrettably, this case would constitute, if it is not prevented, a deplorable addition to a series of similar cases, which demonstrate the direct involvement of Turkey in the unlawful exploitation of Greek Cypriot properties in the occupied area of the Republic of Cyprus. In this regard, tangible proof of this illegal and politically irresponsible attitude of Turkey was provided recently by the "decision"

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of the "Council of Ministers" of the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (published in the *Official Gazette* dated 27 March 2006), which states in paragraph 3 that an "Advisor, who will be appointed by the Aid Mission of the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Nicosia" will be participating in a committee set up for the purpose of exploitation of properties for tourism in a number of Greek Cypriot villages in the occupied Karpasia peninsula. Furthermore, in paragraph 4 (B) of the said "decision", it is stated that five members of the Board of Directors of a company to be established for this project's marketing purposes "will be proposed by the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey".

In view of the ongoing efforts for the implementation of the 8 July agreement aimed at the preparation of the ground for the full resumption of negotiations on the Cyprus problem and taking into consideration that the property issue is one of the most difficult elements of this problem, Turkey must finally assume its responsibilities as the occupying Power and abandon any involvement in the unlawful exploitation of Greek Cypriot properties. Its actions in the specific case of the Apostolos Andreas Monastery are even more treacherous as they are related to a site of highly religious, historic, cultural and symbolic value for the Greek Cypriots. Any attempt to turn the premises of this Monastery into a hotel would undoubtedly contribute to the growth of suspicion and mistrust between the two communities and poison the good climate, which is fundamental to the smooth development of the political process.

The Government of Cyprus wishes to express its appreciation for the ongoing efforts of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus to achieve progress on the issue of the long-overdue renovation and rehabilitation of the Apostolos Andreas Monastery, in accordance with the restoration plans submitted by its lawful owner, namely, the Church of Cyprus.

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 19, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Andreas D. **Mavroyiannis**